



America's Voices from the Border

Excerpts from Today's Hearing on "Border Vulnerabilities and International Terrorism" in Laredo

The House Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation is holding their second field hearing today in Laredo, Texas, examining the topic of "Border Vulnerabilities and International Terrorism." Below are excerpts from the prepared testimony of some of the expert witnesses who are testifying.

Chief Reynaldo Garza, Chief Patrol Agent, Laredo, Texas

"The nexus between our post September 11th mission and our traditional role is clear, terrorists and violent criminals may exploit smuggling routes used by migrants to enter the United States illegally and do us harm."

Reynaldo Garza has been a border security agent at the Laredo Border Patrol Sector for over 30 years and is currently the Chief Patrol Agent.

Sheriff Sigifredo Gonzalez, Zapata County, Texas

"The 2,000 miles of southwestern border needs protection and immediate attention."

"All of us are concerned that the border with Mexico is being used as the front door to this country and that terrorists are already in our back yards."

"At any given time, daytime or nighttime, one can get on a boat and traverse back and forth between Texas and Mexico and not get caught. If smugglers can bring in tons of marijuana and cocaine at one time, and can smuggle 20-30 persons at one time, one can just imagine how easy it would be to bring in 2-3 terrorists or their weapons of mass destruction across the river and not be detected. Chances of apprehension are very slim."

“There cannot be homeland security without border security. Our southwest border needs immediate attention.”

Sheriff Gonzalez has been in law enforcement for 30 years, 12 of those years as a sheriff. He is the past chairman of the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition.

Sheriff Rick Flores, Webb County, Texas

“Our southern border is ripe for a terrorist pipeline.”

“So long as smugglers get top dollar, they'll turn a blind eye to any threat their cargo – human or otherwise – might pose to the safety of Americans.”

“The weakness of our southern border hasn't escaped notice of the drug cartels. We've seen military or semi-military incursions, threatening firepower to protect their loads.”

Sheriff Flores has served as sheriff of Webb County since January 2005. He has extensive law enforcement experience in a variety of areas including the illegal drug trade.

Blas Nuñez-Neto, Analyst, Congressional Research Services

“Appropriations for the Border Patrol have grown steadily, from \$1.06 billion in FY2000 to \$1.74 billion in FY2006—an increase of 64%. Accompanying the budget increase, Border Patrol manpower has more than doubled over the past decade.”

Nunez-Neto has been an Analyst for Domestic Security at the Congressional Research Service since July 2004.

Professor Kris W. Kobach, University of Missouri—Kansas City School of Law

“It is undeniable that terrorists have entered the United States by crossing our land borders illegally.”

“And since 9/11 we have increased our security at ports of entry, which makes illegal border crossing an even more attractive means of entry.”

“...there are statistics suggesting that the number of terrorists crossing our southern border may be much higher than we think. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Border Patrol apprehended 3,722 aliens from nations that are either designated state sponsors of terrorism or places in which Al Qaeda has operated.”

Professor Kobach holds degrees from Harvard University, Oxford University, and Yale Law School. He is a professor of law at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the author of two books and numerous articles, and a frequent legal commentator on national news programs.